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ABSTRACT

If youth employment programs for rural areas are to be successful in helping rural youth to find employment that is both desirable and developmental, the diversity of ability, skills, needs, life goals, and particular circumstances of these young people must be taken into consideration. According to a 1976 study by Kuvlesky and Edington, there is a strong tendency for particular ethnic patterns to exist in the occupational aspirations of rural disadvantaged youth. There is also great intracategory variability for each ethnic-gender type. Findings over a 10-year period indicate that Mexican American youth are socially, culturally, and psychologically bi-ethnic but that they vary in terms of what ethnic subculture traits they want to maintain and in what social contexts they desire to interact with Anglos. In general, Mexican American girls are more comfortable in bi-ethnic work situations than are many Mexican American boys. Though youth vary in the type of employment they want and need, they are very concerned about getting employment and earning money. There is a shortage of jobs for disadvantaged rural youth and a lack of diversity in those jobs that are available. A state and federally funded national policy aimed at improving employment opportunities, social and work skills, and counseling services for disadvantaged rural youth is one means of correcting this situation. (CM)

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SYMPOSIUM ON MINORITY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND RURAL DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

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June 1980

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT OF DISADVANTAGED RURAL MINORITY YOUTH

BY

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Teen-Agers Have A Right To Work

Teenagers should have the right to work if they want to. Many rural youth in the South and Southwest are from economically poor and marginal circumstances and need an income so they can have the means to obtain a decent way of life for themselves, and, also, so they can help parents who are persistently underemployed or periodically unemployed. It is a fact that rural minority youth indicate the need for money and employment as one of their most significant concerns.[1] Consequently, it is a self-defined need, not just a normatively prescribed one imposed on them by adults.

The latent consequences of disadvantaged teenagers being able to work and earn money may even be more important. The sense of social responsibility and personal worth that evolves from successfully holding a job, being able to take care of some of one's own personal needs, and being able to make a contribution to the sustenance of one's family is truly a developmental requisite, which would be difficult to accomplish in any other way. Furthermore, this comes at a time in life development-adolescence - when the individual needs these developmental experiences the most. The transformation from adolescence to young adulthood is often painful for both the youth and his or her family. Conflict, or at least a deterioration of relationships between the teenager and his or her parents, is a common circumstance resulting from the necessary attempts of youth to establish their independence from parental authority, to gain autonomy as a person, and to seek freedom of movement geographically and socially. Often parental attempts to continue to maintain firm control and authority over the youth oppose these developmental needs of their youth.[2] The ability to be a breadwinner, if only to a limited extent, can meliorate this social stress and further both the youth's personal ends as well as the family's.

The more young people are employed in gainful jobs, the more the collective human talent and energy available within the community is being used to contribute to the maintenance and development of the common social structure. Also, the more time youth spend working, the less energy and time is expended in their random attempts to make life interesting and satisfying in environments devoid of adults.[3]

Additionally, particularly for disadvantaged rural youth, the potentials for social and work skill development that a job offers in a formal organization setting can have long term

impacts for defining or refining life goals, improving the probabilities of adult employment success, and in broadening alternative opportunities for upward social mobility.

In summary, everyone gains from the employment of youth in jobs. And, disadvantaged rural youth have more to gain than others - as do most rural communities. If teenagers do not have the right to work now, they should be given this right![4] In both the short-run and the long-run, we hurt ourselves (i.e., community and society), to say nothing of the young people, by not assuring a job to each and every young person who wants one. What is more, I know from my long years of research and life experiences with youth that most disadvantaged rural youth want to have a job very much. The beliefs that these youth are lazy, unambitious, and are afraid of hard work are negative stereotypes. These gross and erroneous generalizations are very damaging to all of us and must be dealt with.[5]

How do we help disadvantaged rural youth find employment? And, how do we maximize the potential for job experience to be developmental when they are obtained? These are two very difficult questions to answer - and it will take more than a sociologist's ideas to accomplish these things. Still, I will attempt in the remainder of this short paper to offer a sociological framework aimed at producing answers for these two questions. The actual social engineering must be done by others - those of you who make social policy, develop social programs, or actually administer or work in community development, CETA, or youth programs at all levels of social organization.

Youth, Adults, and Work: Some Reflections

Several weeks ago, I attended a conference on CETA programs and Hispanics in San Antonio.[6] I learned a lot about CETA and the objectives of the array of programs involved in it. Also, I learned a lot about how the Labor Department evaluated the operations of the program and about many of the problems many of the various program administrators at various levels had in trying to implement these programs. However, after two days and several dozen expert speakers, I never heard anyone address the topic of what the people whom these programs were to serve wanted or needed from them. Absolutely none of the prime speakers - high level Labor Department officials and program administrators, who in this case were also Mexican Americans - even addressed directly the aspirations or felt needs of the so-called "targeted groups" or how what the CETA programs offered might relate to these. I was amazed - and

disturbed. It reminded me of a poem I had written just a few months before for a presentation I gave at another conference. Permit me to share it with you:

A Cry of Youth*

Tried some "snow", drink too much, sex worries me -
Know what I mean?
But those who really care seem so few -
and far between.
Someone who really cares about helping me,
I have never seen -
In the schools, the courthouse, the church -
or clubs for teens.
Where can I go? What can I do? No one cares -
do you?

Clearly, one of the solutions to the problems of rural disadvantaged youth gaining employment rests in creating a broader base of concern for and knowledge about the self-defined concerns, needs, and aspirations of the "targeted group," rural disadvantaged youth in this case.

It appears to me that a large part of the problem these youth face in seeking employment and productive work experiences rests in the misconceptions and ignorance adults have about them. What is more, I think there is a broad, widespread lack of sincere concern among adults for meeting the felt needs of these youth for employment (including those adults involved in development programs). We need to understand and relate to youth's own perceptions of their social circumstances and the self-defined problems they see existing in their social situations. We need to find out more about what these are, and, secondly, to get policy makers, program staff, and local employers and leaders sensitized and concerned about understanding the self-defined problems of youth. Another short poem I wrote as a result of field research experiences with Spanish American youth in northern Taos County, New Mexico, expresses what I am trying to convey here:

Stuck Here

I sit here looking up at the mountain.
But my mind and heart are not here.
They are in Taos - down the road there.

---

* Read at the National Association of Social Workers, "Youth in the Nuclear Age," meetings, San Antonio, Texas, November 17, 1979.

Man, there's nothing here for certain.
No money - no wheels.
No wheels - no job.
No job - no money.
Stuck here.

"Rural Youth Are Not All The Same": Their Orientations Toward Jobs and Employment

One of the major problems we have in trying to develop ways of reaching and helping disadvantaged rural youth is that we tend to view them as a homogeneous category. Of course, this tendency is particularly harmful when the over-generalizations we make about this "social category" do not have a firm basis in scientific observations. For example, it is often proposed that the reason that poor youth (i.e., "rural youth," "Black youth," "Mexican American youth," and so on) do not experience social mobility as adults to the same extent as others is because they have low aspirations or they lack ambition for social attainment. This is a clear negative stereotype! Most rural disadvantaged youth have high aspirations for social achievements relative to the attainment levels of their parents (Tables 1 and 2).[7] What is more, many have a strong intensity of desire to achieve these high aspirations (Table 3).

The data displayed in Tables 1, 2, and 3 are very unique in offering a rigorously structured comparative study across four different ethnic categories of rural youth in the Southwest (Kuvlesky and Edington, 1976). They demonstrate quite clearly the several dimensions of variability which cut across the presumed homogeneous social grouping we refer to as "rural youth." And, this is done in reference to a subject of direct relevance for our concerns here - the job aspirations of these youth. Certainly, we need to know more about how youth define their needs if we are to serve them well.

Ethnic and gender variability is obvious in the "most frequently selected" job aspirations of the youth we studied (Table 1). Except for the Mexican American boys compared with their female counterparts, every ethnic-gender type had a different occupational type most frequently selected. The findings summarized in Table 4 clearly demonstrate the strong tendency for particular ethnic patterns to exist in emphasis of apsirations selected or ignored. A clear implication of these findings for serving employment needs of rural youth - assuming we want their employment experiences to have relevance for their life goals - is that we need to be sensitive to patterned ethnic and gender differences in youths' percep-

Table 1. Ethnic Differences in the Most Frequently Selected Types of Occupational Aspirations Among Rural, Teen-Age Youth in the Southwest.[1]

	Navajo (New Mexico)	Mexican-American (Texas)	Black (Texas)	Anglo (Texas)
A. Males				
Rank				
1	Skilled Worker (38)	Low Professional (25)*	Glamour (27)**	Managerial (26)
2	Operative (18)	Skilled Worker (22)	Skilled Worker (18)	Low Professional (20) Skilled Worker (19)
B. Females				
Rank				
1	Clerical and Sales (41)	Low Professional (51)	Low Professional (39)	Low Professional (33)
2	Low Professional (26)	Clerical and Sales (20)	Clerical and Sales (23)	Clerical and Sales (29)

Figures in parentheses are actual percentages selecting the type of job aspirations.

* Includes occupations such as nurse, teacher, and others normally requiring four years of college.

** Includes occupations such as professional athlete, pop singer, and jet pilot.

1 This is a previously unpublished set of data taken from a paper by Kuvlesky and Edington (1976:18).

Table 2. Ethnic Differences in Types of Occupational Aspirations of Rural Teen-Age Youth in the Southwest.[1]

	Type of Occupational Aspiration	Males				Females			
		Navajo	Mex.-Amer.	Black	Anglo	Navajo	Mex.-Americ.	Black	Anglo
		%				%			
1.	High Professional	11	8	7	8	6	6	2	3
2.	Low Professional	9	25	11	20	26	51	39	33
3.	Glamour	5	9	27	12	2	8	17	16
4.	Managerial	10	15	6	26	3	1	0	1
5.	Clerical and Sales	0	3	3	1	41	20	23	29
6.	Skilled	38	20	18	19	9	6	10	4
7.	Operative	18	3	7	4	1	1	2	0
8.	Laborer	1	4	5	3	7	2	4	4
9.	Housewife	--	--	--	--	1	0	0	7
	No Information	8	14	15	7	3	5	2	3
	TOTAL	100	101	99	100	99	99	99	98

$x^2 = 124.19$ d.f. = 24 P = 0 $x^2 = 106.42$ d.f.= 27 P = 0

Table 3. Interethnic Comparison of Strength of Intensity of Aspirations of Teen-Age Rural Youth by Sex[1].

Intensity of Aspiration*	Males				Females			
	Navajo	Mex.-Amer.	Black	Anglo	Navajo	Mex.-Amer.	Black	Anglo
	%				%			
Strong (1,2)	31	60	43	55	45	74	44	48
Intermed. (3,4,5)	41	36	43	36	38	20	40	43
Weak (6,7)	12	3	7	7	5	3	11	8
No Information	16	1	7	3	11	4	5	1
TOTAL	100	100	100	101	99	101	100	100
NUMBER	170	170	98	148	215	197	94	153

$x^2 = 61.81$ d.f. = 9 P = 0 $x^2 = 66.06$ d.f. = 9 P = 0

[1] This table is taken from an unpublished paper by Kuvlesky and Edington (1976:21).

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Table 4. Ethnic Emphases in Disproportionately Selecting or Ignoring Types of Job Aspirations by Teen-Age Youth.[1]

Ethnic Type	Disproportionate Emphases: Selected	Disproportionate Emphases: Ignored
A. Boys		
Navajo	Skilled Work	Low Professional, Glamour, Labor
Mexican-American	Low Professional	Operative
Black	Glamour	Low Professional, Managerial
Anglo	Managerial	----------
B. Girls		
Navajo	Clerical & Sales	Glamour
Mexican-American	Low Professional	-------
Black	Glamour	-------
Anglo	Housewife	-------

[1] This table is taken from Kuvlesky and Edington (1976: 39).

tions of the meaning and utilities of different kinds of work.

Perhaps more important than the general patterns of ethnic and gender differences in occupational goals is the tremendous amount of intracategory variability existing for each ethnic-gender type as is clearly observable in Table 2. Within every ethnic category, not only do boys and girls vary in patterned ways, but there is also tremendous variation in type of aspirations within each gender category: for instance, equally significant proportions of Mexican American boys want to be low level professionals, skilled blue collar workers, and managers. Will one "youth employment program" serve the needs of all these youth equally well? At the very least, should we not try to ascertain how the employment opportunities we might create for youth can relate and contribute to the career aspirations of each one? Recently, I talked at length with a County Judge from a nonmetro area in South Texas about the needs of local youth. Reflecting on a CETA program he knew about, he said, "We ruin our kids. We send them to work on the roads where we don't have enough work. They don't learn what they need and they learn bad habits." Like many programs aimed at youth employment, I suspect this one is a "body count" operation - how many kids can you put on a job during the summer to spend the revenue sharing funds you have and to stimulate receiving more of them. Like Judge "J.B.G.," I tend to think such programs are counterproductive in meeting youth's developmental needs and long-run life goals; however, they do serve pragmatic short-run economic needs of the youth and political purposes of local, state, and federal agency officials.

While youth may vary markedly in the type of employment that they want and need, they are very concerned about getting employment and earning money. A very recent study of disadvantaged families we have just completed in South Texas (Cameron and Brooks Counties) provides some fresh data in this regard (Table 5).[8] One-half of these youth are concerned about a self-defined need to have money and the most common concern of all related to "future employment". This Symposium is directly focused on some of the most pressing concerns the youth in this region - Mexican American youth in South Texas - say they have. My field research in other regions of the U.S. provide me with evidence to support the notion that this is indeed generally true of most rural disadvantaged youth, regardless of cultural context or location.[9] Most of these youth want to work if they can get a job and have the ability to travel to it.

Table 5. South Texas Mexican-American Youth's Self-defined Causes of Concern and Anxiety by Type of Place of Residence, 1978-1979.

FOCUS OF CONCERN	Metro [1] (N=89)	Non-metro [2] (N=64)
	---% Showing Strong Concern---[3]	
A. Moral Behavior		
(1) Dating and sex	24	35
(7) Drinking	22	42
(9) Use of drugs	26	47
(10) Being religious	33	46
B. Social Relations		
(4) Getting along/parents	71	71
(6) Having friends	57	73
(5) Feelings about myself	60	59
C. Social Status Achievements		
(2) Studies	69	75
(3) Future job	76	78
(4) Having money	48	49

[1] Brownsville, Texas

[2] Brooks Co., Texas

[3] Percent indicating either "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned."

Minority Group Orientations: Mexican American Rural Youth

While we are on the subject of Mexican American rural youth - a focus very appropriate for this setting and audience, I would like to address another issue that may seem somewhat peripheral - ethnic orientations or what I call "Minority Group Orientations."[10] These orientations toward interethnic relations have relevance for matching youth employees with possible "employment contexts" (Table 6). Again, findings we have accumulated over ten years indicate Mexican American rural youth are very diverse in ethnic attributes and ethnic orientations. For instance, here in South Texas, most Mexican American youth are bilingual but they vary in their use of English vs. Spanish in different social contexts. We studied rural Mexican American youth in 1967 and again in 1973 - a period that covered the historical heart of the Chicano Movement - and observed no substantial changes in bilingual usage patterns.[11] The variability in language usage patterns among these supposedly culturally homogeneous youth is truly remarkable. Certainly preference for a language and ability to use it fully are important considerations for counseling youth for work placement.

A 1973 study (Miller, 1980) of preference for ethnic labeling showed evidence that a substantial proportion of Mexican American youth had strong ethnicity (preferred "Chicano" as a label); however, Chicano was also the label most frequently disliked (Table 7).

Miller (1978) has found from analysis of these data that ethnic labeling preferences vary not only by gender and SES, but also by specific location (community) within a homogeneous sociocultural nonmetropolitan area. I suppose this is not too surprising to those well familiar with South Texas - compare the situations of Crystal City and Falfurrias for instance; however, knowing youth's ethnic orientations and feelings about intergroup relations should be a requisite for appropriate counseling and placement in jobs, particularly where the youth represents a minority and the potential employer the Anglo majority group. Evidence from our studies on both language patterns and ethnic identity appears to indicate that <u>in general</u> Mexican American girls would find it more comfortable in bi-ethnic work situations than would many boys; however, this may vary from one community to another.

An attempt I made recently to explore the varied minority group orientations of rural Mexican American youth indicate that only a very few are militant ethnics, a small proportion

Table 6. Use of Spanish by Mexican American High School Boys and Girls in Different Informal Social Relationships (in percentages).[1]

Language Pattern Used	Parents		Close Friends In Neighborhood		Close Friends In School-Out of Class	
	Male (N=289)	Female (N=307)	Male (N=289)	Female (N=307)	Male (N=289)	Female (N=307)
English	5	7	11	17	20	32
Same amount of both	19	38	35	56	50	55
Spanish	76	55	54	27	30	13
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100
No Information	1	0	1	0	1	0

[1] Table taken from Patella and Kuvlesky, "Situational Variation in Language Patterns of Mexican-American Boys and Girls," SSQ (April, 1971), p. 859.

Table 7. Ethnic Orientations of Rural Mexican-American Youth by Sex.[2]

Label	Males	Females
Pro-Chicano	54% (62)	20% (27)
Anti-Chicano	46% (52)	80% (107)
Total	100% (114)	100% (134)

[2] Table taken from Michael V. Miller, "Chicano and Anti-Chicano: Ethnic Identity Polarization and Selected Status Indicators," South Texas Journal of Research and Humanities. (Fall, 1978), 125-139.

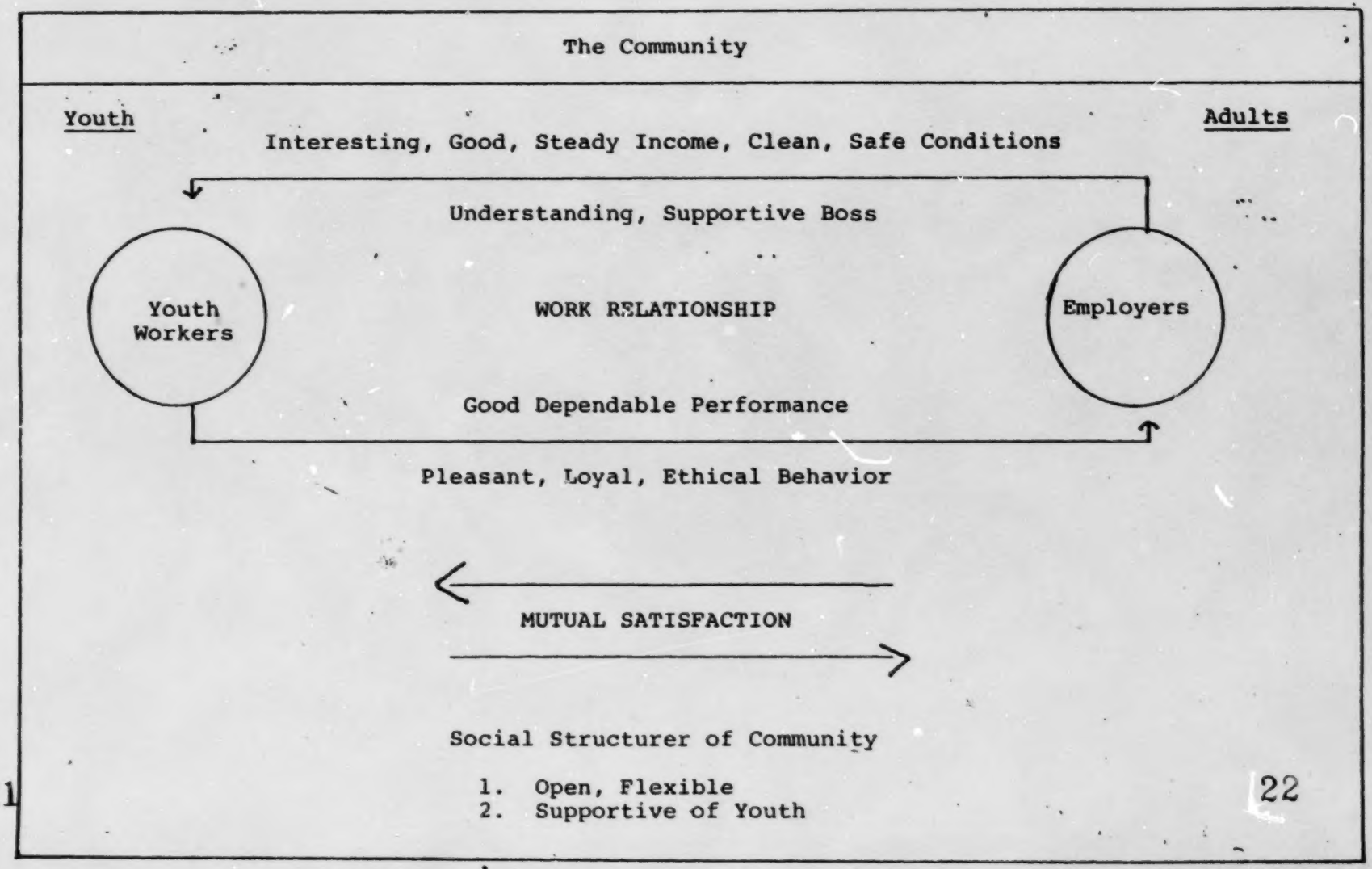
are strongly oriented toward full assimilation, and most are culturally, socially, and psychologically bi-ethnic (Kuvlesky, 1979, AHS). But those that are bi-ethnic in their orientations vary in terms of what ethnic subculture traits they want to maintain and in what social contexts they desire to interact with Anglos. Most desire interaction with Anglos in work situations. Youth who are strongly oriented toward full assimilation would prefer to work with Anglos but could be predicted to have trouble with Mexican American employers who were strongly bi-ethnic or militant ethnic in their orientations.

I am suggesting it would be useful in any program to investigate both the employee's and the employer's orientations toward interethnic contact to aid decisions about job placement. In Appendix A, I have offered an instrument containing indicators that could be used to quickly ascertain the general minority group orientations of a particular individual Mexican American. It should be kept in mind that a minority group member's orientation toward intergroup fusion (i.e., desire for it) can vary among elements -- language preferences vs. desire to interact with Anglos -- and also change over time, sometimes dramatically.

Youth, the Community, and Employment Programs

From a sociological perspective, the problem of getting disadvantaged rural young people employed involves the interpenetration of three sets of elements -- community structures, potential workers, and potential employers. Ideally, our aspiration is to develop a situation where all the jobs needed for youth exist in a community or employment area and that all youth needing and wanting work are performing productive jobs to the satisfaction of their employers (Figure 1). Given that jobs exist, the ideal model of youth employer relations could be viewed as a double contingency, reciprocal structure involving the communication of clear expectations and the performance of rewarding and satisfying work roles relative to each other. Yes, this is a visionary dream; however, it also represents the ultimate goal we are striving for. Certainly we are seeking to at least approximate, or to begin to work toward, this ideal! What are the alternatives? We have witnessed them in the past and continue to suffer the consequences resulting from wasted youth, wasted human potential, broken dreams, and defeated, apathetic human beings. Sure, some make it -- one way or another, but many do not. And these survive to refuel the problem with their offspring -- new youth for another generation of drifting values and endless personal and social defeats and injury. Yes, the lack of a job and of a

Figure 1. The Double Contingency Model of Desired Interpenetration of Potential Employers and Willing Youth Workers: The Ideal



dependable income -- when these become a widespread patterned phenomena, as it is among most disadvantaged, rural youth -- is a social illness; a structural illness that injures self-esteem and robs the spirit of the desire to achieve and the mind of hopes and dreams. I have witnessed this scene a number of times and so have many of you.

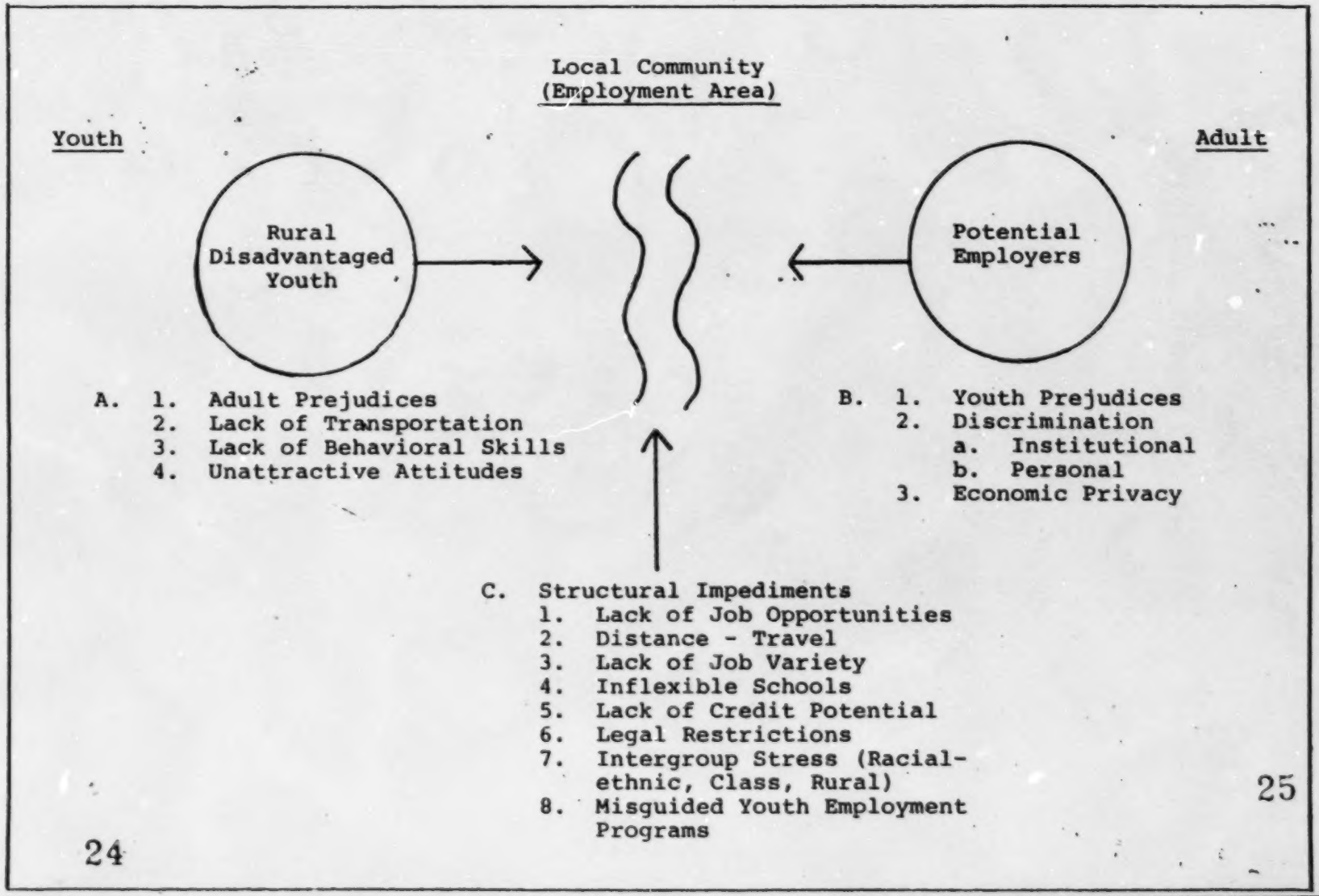
What can be done? Obviously, a lot of things need to be done by a lot of people if we are to impact broadly on this problem. Given the time I have here and my own limitations of knowledge and expertise, perhaps the best I can offer is to sketch the elements of the problem from a perspective of sociological analysis. In Figure 2, I attempt to do this by essentially viewing the problem as consisting of poor articulation between three sets of elements: attributes and circumstances of rural youth themselves ("A"); attributes of employers and work systems ("B"); and the structural nature of the community ("C"). In this "realistic" model positing a general lack of satisfactory, stable youth employment, I list some of the major attributes of each of the three components that interfere with the achievement of moving toward the "ideal" state described earlier. We have discussed some of these earlier when we described rural youths' orientation toward work, their need for transportation (i.e., a car), and derivatively, credit, and the potential prejudice of employers toward youth, or rural youth, or Mexican American youth. We need to know more about these things and others -- how to get employers to hire more local youth at fair wages and fewer "illegals" at low wages, for instance. We need to investigate whether or not and how, in particular cases, direct or indirect structural discrimination excludes youth from particular jobs having developmental potential.

In this case, for the most part, we are not dealing with union structures, but rather policies and practices of managers and business owners. And, let us not forget the need to counsel and train youth in regard to their prejudices and to meliorate negative behavioral patterns, which may lead to terminating an opportunity that has been found.

In the end, whatever we might do to facilitate the development of youth as potential employees or to alter the attitudes and practices of employers to make them more receptive to hiring these youth will not have a broad impact unless jobs are available for youth to fill. Obviously this is a prerequisite to altering our poor record in rural youth employment in general. Two basic problems exist in this regard:

(1) The absolute scarcity of any stable job opportunities.

Figure 2. A Conflict Model of Structured Impediments to Employment of Rural Disadvantaged and Minority Youth



(2) The lack of diversity in the type and nature of jobs among those few that are available to allow for fitting a variety of youth to appropriate, desired employment development lines.

The first of these can be solved by bringing labor intensive industry into or in close proximity to a rural area, or by utilizing federal monies to employ youth in "community development" work. Many youth will receive short-term benefits from such employment experiences. Still, these alternatives are not likely to offer long-term developmental potential for many, or even most, rural disadvantaged youth. If we desire this higher quality pay-off from youth employment experience, we would be far better off putting our efforts into making our rural disadvantaged youth more mobile -- free them from their constraints tied to a lack of good transportation. Develop programs of special, easy credit for purchasing and repairing motor vehicles. Combine this with a well thought-out and well-structured program of social skill and behavior development for a work environment and a satisfactory relationship with an employer. And, we need to include counseling initially and as continuous follow-up and to evolve a broad information vehicle to get information on job opportunities over a broad geographical area quickly and to get it to the young people. These things could constitute parts of a viable program allowing youth maximum autonomy and, yet, practical facilitation.

If we succeed, some youth will leave the rural community as their path of vertical achievements outgrow local alternatives. Others will stay and commute long distances: perhaps coming home only on weekends. And some will stay where they were born and raised - good jobs or not. It will take a mix of a variety of strategies to serve the diverse needs of the heterogeneous category we lable "rural disadvantaged youth." It seems quite clear that we might stand a better chance of achieving some success in this regard if we can get the various government agencies at all levels, experts of all kinds, and locally concerned leaders interrelating and working together within a common framework of effort. Neither any of us, nor any single agency, can adequately cope with this complex problem alone.

There is a lot each of us can do with his or her own special abilities, knowledge, skills, and influence. For instance, I can more directly turn my attention to researching forms of reciprocal prejudice between youth and adults in employment situations and develop diagnostic tools for youth employment program staff to use in counseling and placement:

I have placed an example of one such instrument I developed in collaboration with Extension Service colleagues in Appendix B and I described another one previously (Appendix A).[12] Still, we can accomplish much more and have broader impact if we can get together. This symposium in itself is a demonstration that we can do this.

Some Suggestions for Action

Over the past several years, I have written at length about the needs and problems of rural youth and what we must do to meliorate these. I share with you some excerpts from the concluding statements of several prior reports that I think have relevance here in guiding us toward program development in youth employment programs for rural areas.[13]

National Priorities and Federal Assistance

In the USA we maintain as cultural themes the right of the individual to self-realization (within some normative limits) and the belief in all youth having an equal opportunity to do so. This is not to say that the social reality fits perfectly with these ideals (President's Commission, 1967; Miller and Roby, 1970:119-160). Certainly, most rural youth are hindered, relative to many nonrural youth, in realizing their life ends. Because they are situated in small communities rather than metropolitan areas, they are at a relative disadvantage in realizing their personal and social potentials as adults.

At present, the American society at large (i.e., the federal government) has not accepted the burden of equalizing opportunity for rural youth relative to nonrural youth. It is not likely that either most rural families or small communities will have the resources to do so. Also, quite probably, most small communities have not done so and will not be inclined to do so (Gans, 1968). What is true for rural youth in general in this regard is going to exist to even a greater degree for rural minority youth and the rural poor.

Consequently, our first and most important need is the development of a high priority national policy aimed at improving employment opportunities, social and work skills, and counseling services for disadvantaged rural youth. Particular attention should be given to develop specialized programs for the disadvantaged Black youth in the rural South and Mexican American youth in the Southwest, for they suffer the most severe impediments to obtaining and maintaining employment

(Kuvlesky and Boykin, 1977; Kuvlesky and Juarez, 1975). There is a need for massive federal and state investments in developing the community structures required to effectively support such a program. And, there is a need to develop broader, more intensively coordinated efforts at all levels among what are now often competing government agencies, minority interest groups, and specialized organizations of professionals to evolve specific development plans targeted to particular rural locales.

Perhaps the Carter Administration plans for a broad, "Youth Employment Program" will provide an opportunity for getting started on priority assistance for rural disadvantaged youth.

Serving Youth as Individuals

We must develop programs that take into consideration the diversity of ability, skills, needs, life goals, and particular circumstances of the individuals we tend to lump into disadvantaged, rural youth categories (i.e., "The Rural Mexic American Youth" or "The Rural Black Youth"). The values, aspirations, and circumstances of rural youth will vary b age, sex, social class, individual attributes, and local social conditions. If our ultimate objective is to serv youth in helping them achieve their self-determined ends, must constantly keep in mind this potential for diversity, strive to comprehend ways of dealing with it in structuring youth programs and services.

Intergroup Relations

An additional confounding problematic situation in organizing a coherent and productive life is experienced by youth who are from ethnic minority groups. Minority ethnic youth suffer particular disadvantages, not only in the sense of being subjected to impersonal discriminatory practices and the consequences of these for level of living and economic well-being but for other aspects of quality of life as well; for instance, self-image, quality of peer associations, kinship relations, and ability to relate to key adult figures within their communities. The additional element referred to here is ethnic sensitivity or identification and its correlates in terms of "Minority Group Orientations" (Kuvlesky, 1979, AHS). My findings clearly demonstrate the potential for a serious dilemma for these youth: the internal variability within the ethnic group can create feelings of hostility and patterned conflict with ethnic peers and kin, while at the same time, the general desire for the maintenance of some degree of

ethnic identification and practice will create problems in gaining the good graces and social sponsorship of those key figures in the dominant ethnic group usually monitoring the doors to success. They will expect and encourage full assimilation as they always have. Consequently, many ethnic minority youth must lose--one way or the other--support, social identity, self pride, and social facilitation.

This is not just a "Minority" problem: it is a societal problem. We all reap the consequences of our passive acceptance of traditional structures of extreme perjorative ethnic prejudices and discrimination in the twisted minds, broken lives, wasted human potentials, and factioned social contexts we must endure. Let's get realistic and sensitize ourselves to the reality disadvantaged minority youth perceive and experience.

Continuing Counseling Structures

I am firmly convinced that the most pressing and immediate need of rural teenagers in our society today is to have access to readily available, broadly oriented, nonjudgmental life counselors. Some of the disadvantages rural youth suffer in psychological and skill development and in reference to training can be accomplished through the school or school related organizations. Other needs, such as obtaining jobs, having access to alternative leisure activities, experiencing culturally and socially broadening experiences, and enjoying the company of age peers, can be served to some extent through the various youth organization that adults provide for them in most communities. Still most disadvantaged rural youth do not participate much in these (Kuvlesky, 1979, HS). And, I am pessimistic about our capability to provide for all youth the broad-life counseling function they need and want so much through these existing institutions.

By all means, as we work with rural youth in whatever capacity, let's not presume to mold them in the shape of our own values and concerns: they would fail to interpret this as generosity on our part, let alone help. We need to help them better understand themselves and their circumstances so that with our help and facilitations they can move themselves forward in a manner satisfying to them and productive for society.

FOOTNOTES

1. I have found this to be true in research I have carried out in South Texas, East Texas, Northern New Mexico, and Eastern Ohio (Kuvlesky, 1979-HS; Kuvlesky, 1978-SSA, Kuvlesky, 1979-Sourcebook). Clearly, this must be a very general pattern.

2. I provide a detailed analysis of the parent-adolescent conflict pattern and a suggestion for meliorating it in another report (Kuvlesky, 1977-Purdue).

3. For a description of these patterns in two different cultural contexts, see recent comparative analysis I did on Taos County, N.M. and Holmes County, Ohio (Kuvlesky, 1978-SSA).

4. Obviously, legitimate differences of opinion exist on at what age young people should be allowed to do different kinds of work. Additionally, one can legitimately argue that the structure of a legal "minimum wage" may serve youth as well as older workers. Still, these institutionalized structures do make it harder for rural youth to find employment opportunities in rural areas. In South Texas, in particular, it is often easier and cheaper for an employer to hire "illegals" than to hire local youth.

5. A diagnostic tool designed to reveal different types of prejudice adults have about youth is given in Appendix B. A pretest of this on professional youth workers indicated that even they demonstrated substantial prejudice toward youth.

6. UTSA SYMPOSIUM HISPANICS AND CETA: The Role of the Social Scientist in CETA, San Antonio, January 31-February 1, 1980.

7. See Kuvlesky and Boykin (1977), Kuvlesky and Venegas (1974), and Kuvlesky and Juarez (1975).

8. These are preliminary findings from a Texas Agricultural Experiment Station study. We will be reporting final results from the study during this coming year. Miller and Maril (1978) have analyzed the structural conditions of "Poverty in the Lower Rio Grande Valley" as a part of this study.

9. See prior statement in Footnote 1.

10. The notion of "Minority Groups Orientations" refers to desires on the part of a minority group toward maintaining ethnic separation or, conversely, to achieve assimilation in reference to various aspects of social life (Kuvlesky, 1979-AHS).

11. For a detailed analysis of historical change in language, use patterns of rural Mexican American youth. See Patella and Kuvlesky (1975).

12. This instrument evolved out of a collaborative effort which took place in a one week in-service workshop involving Texas Agricultural Extension Service staff this past summer - "Working with Mexican American Youth."

13. See Kuvlesky (1979 - Sourcebook), Kuvlesky and Boykin (1977), Kuvlesky (1977), and Kuvlesky and Juarez (1975).

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APPENDIX A

Minority Group Orientation Inventory -- Mexican Americans

A. What ethnic label do you most prefer for others to use in referring to your heritage or ancestry?

_____

B. Should Mexican American children - (check only one)

_____ 1. Be taught Spanish well in school, along with English?

_____ 2. Be allowed to use Spanish outside school, but not encouraged to use it in school?

_____ 3. Not be encouraged to use Spanish at all?

C. Would you like: (answer each one Yes or No)

_____ 1. To have an Anglo living next door to you?

_____ 2. To have an Anglo boss on the job?

_____ 3. To have an Anglo marry a brother or sister?

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Scoring Directions

A. Psychological Fusion

Score	Answer	Put Actual Scores
3	Mexicano, Mexican (3)	
2	Chicano (2)	
2	Mexican American (2)	
1	American of Mexican Descent	
1	American, None (1)	

(Meaning of labels can vary by local area.) _____

B. Cultural Fusion

Score		Questions
3	#1	
2	#2	(score for the one checked.)
1	#3	

_____

C. Social Fusion

Give each "No" a value of 1 and sume the values:

3 = Assimilation Resistant

2 = Bi-Ethnic

0 or 1 = Assimilation Prone

_____

TOTAL INVENTORY SCORES

Sum the numerical values associated with each of the three parts and interpret as follows: (Possible range in scores in 2-9).

2/3 - Assimilation Prone

TOTAL INVENTORY SCORES (continued)

4
5 - Bi-Ethnic
6
7

Weak

Strong

8
9 - Strong Ethnic Heritage (Pluralist)

(Total Score)

APPENDIX B

ADULT PREJUDICES TOWARD YOUTH

The inventory given below was developed to determine how much and what kinds of prejudices adults have toward young people. We know this device works: all it requires is that you be as honest as you can in saying how you feel. Nobody else will see your responses.

The Inventory

Please indicate how you honestly feel about each of the following statements by checking the blank under the answer that best represents how you feel about each statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongl Disagre
1. I prefer working with adults to working with young people.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
2. School administrators should enforce strict dress codes.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
3. Teenage workers should not have to be paid the full minimum wage.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
4. I prefer to have families <u>without</u> teenagers as neighbors.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
5. Teenagers don't pick up after themselves.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
6. The music teenagers listen to is just noise!	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
7. The age for becoming a legal adult should have been left at 21.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
8. There are some places I refuse to go because they are overrun with teens.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
9. Teenagers are rude.	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)